

Press Release

Henni Alftan

Night-time

September 17–October 30, 2021

Sprüth Magers *Window*

Sprüth Magers

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present a solo exhibition by Henni Alftan as part of this year's Gallery Weekend *Discoveries. Titled *Night-time*, the Sprüth Magers *Window* presentation features ten new works by the Paris-based artist. This exhibition format is visible from the street and is particularly effective after dark, when the wood-paneled walls of the intimate-looking space are bathed in a warm light that fuses reality with the world of Alftan's pictures.

Alftan's figurative paintings negotiate the relationship between medium and image, employing a subtle palette and flat rendering style to transform their everyday subject matter from object to motif. Her pared-down compositions connote a stillness that oscillates between monotony and anticipation.

As a painter Alftan is keenly aware of the long tradition of the medium, and her work deals freely in art-historical and pop-cultural references. The visual language and atmosphere of suspense cinema inspired her to leave the audience in a state of uncertainty. Quite often she shows, that there is something you cannot see.

Imagery in Alftan's paintings – the wristwatch in *5:15* (2021), the broken glasses in *Broken Pair* (2021), the digital alarm clock that reads 00:01 in *After Midnight* (2021) – often comes across as familiar, as if one has seen it before. A focus on commonplace, supposedly mundane objects in a way that completely eliminates context gives the paintings a somewhat unsettling quality: though immediately recognizable, their significance remains a mystery. In *Nightstand* (2021), this enigmatic withholding of supposed missing information happens on a number of levels at once: In a dark room we see a picture frame on a nightstand, its top drawer slightly ajar. Yet all we see of the frame is its image from the back, the contour of its shadow on the wall.

An instinctual need to derive meaning from images, to draw connections between them, can make it tempting to infer narratives from the paintings. And yet the scenes and objects have no immanent context, as they do not recreate real scenes. Like Alftan's art practice, the works absorb their immediate surroundings. She herself is an observer, "It's my way of existing." The objects these paintings render – the information Alftan chooses

to include or omit – encourage contemplation of the everyday. The paintings themselves invite viewers to share the artist's perspective, to immerse themselves in her way of looking at the world.

Henni Alftan (*1979, Helsinki) lives and works in Paris. Institutional group exhibitions include those at ENSA Limoges, École Nationale Supérieure d'Art (2020); Kuntzi Museum of Modern Art, Vaasa (2018); Hämeenlinna Art Museum, Finland and Musée des Beaux-Arts de Brest (both 2017) and Amos Anderson Art Museum (2015). Alftan's works are included in the collections of the Helsinki Art Museum; Amos Rex, Helsinki; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Dallas Museum of Art, EMMA Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland and the Kuntzi Museum of Modern Art, Vaasa.

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